

خلق الهويات الجديدة من التقاليد القديمة

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يتناول هذا البحث موضوع البحث عن الذات وذلك من خلال دراسة تكوين ونشأة بطلة هذه الرواية وكيفية وصولها لذاتها والمصاعب التي تواجهها في رحلة البحث عن الذات. قوم هذه الدراسة على البحث عن الذات في رواية "اني جون" لجاميكا كينكيد كرواية تنتمي إلى الثقافة الكاريبية. تتحدي كينكيد النوع الاجتماعي لثقافتها الأم والقيود المفروضة عليها بالكتابة عن الذات لكونها أديبه من الأقليات المهمشة التي تعكس كتباتها موقف المرأة المضطهدة الواعية تماما مدى تأثير النوع الاجتماعي والثقافة في صياغة العلاقات وتحديد مكانة المرأة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك فإن الكاتبه تبرز في هذة الرواية تأثير علاقة الأم بابنتها كمصدر للقوة من جانب والاختناق بالحماية المبالغ فيها والسيطرة من قبل الأم من جانب آخر ولذلك تسعى البطلة، اني جون ، في البحث عن الذات بعيدا عن سيطرة الأم وفي سبيل ذلك تقرر مغادرة وطنها والسفر لأنجلترا لتحقيق ذاتها بعيدا عن سيطرة الأم ومحاولات طمس هويتها من قبل أمها التى تحاول جعلها نسخة من المستعمر ومن خلال التعليم الذي تتلقاه علي يد المستعمر والذي يعكس أهوائة وأرائة.

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When brought together with the centrality of Annie's voice and a narrative structure organized around the salient moment in Annie's development, they provide the necessary elements to consider *Annie John* a well-woven and connected text even though it was first published as independent prose pieces.

to their publication in book form in 1985. The earliest chapter of *Annie John* to be published, "The Circling Hand," appeared in November 1983; the last, "The Long Rain," appeared in July 1984. What differentiates *Annie John* from other novels is that Kincaid does not attempt to provide a continuous narrative in which every stage of Annie's development is accounted for. What she does provide are the salient points in Annie's story, the moments of importance that explain the choices available to her and what she makes of them but what is important is that Kincaid's episodes are organized dramatically so as to lead to her last climactic chapter, "The Long Rain", in which Annie's dilemma reaches a boiling point and she suffers the equivalent of a nervous breakdown from which she must emerge as a young woman.

Moreover, Kincaid's novel is also unified thematically. The recurrence of a number of themes- Annie's process of maturation, the role colonialism plays in her development, the centrality of her relationship with her mother, the various modes of resistance she adopts in her search for personal autonomy- all contribute to integrate the various narrative strands of the text into one unified whole.

It is worth mentioning hat Kincaid uses the genre of the novel as a bildungsroman or novel of development, which chronicles the moral, psychological, and intellectual development of a young man or woman to focus on her point of view and stress it. Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert explains in her book *Jamaica Kincaid: A Critical Companion*:

> The bildungsroman has been a favorite genre of Caribbean writers, who have used its focus on the central character's growth and formation to establish parallels between their experiences and those of the small West Indian colonies in which their characters' lives unfold. These novels are anti-colonial narratives that chronicle the protagonist's growth toward maturity and independence as a mirror to his or her society's progress from colonialism to independence. (86)

Annie grows before the reader's eyes who encounter the process of her growth and coming to terms with the world. *Annie John* had also been published by Jamaica Kincaid in the *New Yorker* as independent prose pieces prior

from a cultural context nor from a society determined to erase her individuality. In addition, the complex relationships that Annie has with the people around her, particularly her mother, forces her to recognize the devastating effects of internalized racism and colonial values which contribute in erasing her identity. While the lessons learned are disconcerting, Annie does not feel depressed and surrender, but rather these conditions instill anger in her and the desire for change. Kincaid defines her protagonist's success in terms of her awareness of and reaction to the problem. However, Kincaid prefers not to conclude her novel only portraying her protagonist with the final exhilaration of starting a new and independent life. Annie is aware of her history and struggles to escape it by travelling to a New World to establish her identity. However, Annie's both worlds, the Old and New world, will combine to constitute her identity. Annie will have to negotiate between her past, present, and future to create her identity. Annie will make her new identity from old cloth and is brave enough to risk independence to achieve her identity and it is on that rising action that *Annie John* ends.

negotiation is already in progress; rather than rejecting forthrightly her mother's land and the mother country to which she is about to depart. Annie apparently attempts to reconcile her past with her future: her name "*was* written in big, black letters all over her trunk, sometimes, followed by her address in Antigua, sometimes followed by her address *as it would be* in England" (Kincaid 130; emphasis added). Significantly, Annie's new trunk is a symbol of her new identity and the existence she is about to begin. It is also necessary for the wheel to come full circle for Annie to establish her own separation from the structure of which she previously had been a part. Thus, Annie's past will be a constitutive part of her future. As H. Adlai Murdoch asserts, "Annie John's eventual departure from her homeland is the outcome of her recognition of an existence which she has outgrown and a step toward the establishment of a newer, more valid one" (Murdoch 339).

It is clear that Kincaid's protagonist is anxious to define herself as an individual away from the flawed community in which she lives. Ultimately, however, being the descendant of black, colonized subjects, she recognizes that regardless of how she tries, she can not divorce herself

after that from which she hears the waves lapping around the ship sounding as if a vessel full of liquid was "placed on its side and now was slowly emptying out" (Kincaid 148).

Critics differ in their view of the book's final image of the vessel, Diane Simmons explains in her book *Jamaica Kincaid* that "it can be read as an image of death, as the blood flows from the body. But it is also an image of impending renewal, for if the vessel is too fragile to sustain its own emptiness, the old makes way for the new" (119). In her book *Jamaica Kincaid: A Critical Companion*, Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert explains that "the image juxtaposed as it is in the text to that of the water vessel emptying out, invokes the flow of the amniotic fluid that precedes birth, signaling Annie's emergence from the womb into an independent self" (107).

In my point of view, the vessel is an image of renewal but that does not mean that the new will replace the old, the new and old will combine to constitute Annie's identity. Annie has to put her past, present, and future together in order to create her identity. It is clear that when Annie was on the verge of departing for England, this incipient

recreating lost memories of her mother and mother's land. This is the last memory she takes with her to the mother country. Holding her parents' hands tightly, Annie has a feeling that "it had all been a mistake," and that she can still stay in the secure world she knows; but in a moment of epiphany remembers that she is no longer a child and that "now when I made up my mind about something I had to see it through" (Kincaid 146). This part ends with the launch arriving at the ship.

The final section of "A Walk to the Jetty" completes the process of Annie's separation from her parents and her past. Moved, Annie and her mother cry, and her mother holds her so tightly that she can not breathe. Annie is suddenly "on her guard," remembering that the price of this love is death by suffocation (Kincaid 147). The last farewells between Annie and her parents show Annie's duality. Annie and her parents smile at each other, "but I know the opposite was in my heart" and while Annie feels happy that she is leaving she shows that she regrets that. She also has to remember to wave the red handkerchief given to her by her mother for that purpose and to continue to do so until she can no longer see them. Annie goes to her cabin

The third part of the chapter follows Annie's "Walk to the Jetty" with her parents. The description of their walk reads like that of a ceremonial procession through the significant moments of Annie's past: "I was passing through most of the years of my life". The bittersweet procession describes the last time in which Annie and her parents will walk in the old way with Annie in-between. These details which Annie offers of this dreamlike walk represent her effort to encapsulate the memories she intends to keep inside forever.

In the fourth part of the final chapter, Annie chronicles her feelings as she boards the launch that will take her and her parents to the boat anchored in the bay. In this part Annie's narrative voice uses the phrase "I shall never see this again" (Kincaid 145) like a mantra that makes her heart pound with joy and pain at the same time. The pain of loss and the triumph of renewal coexist inside her; she is both dying and coming alive. Annie's walk to the boat gives agency to her past as she recalls and reconnects with her past, a past that could not have existed without the presence of her mother. Her walk through the entire town before travelling to England is no mere coincidence. She is

could hold underwater until it died. (Kincaid 127-128)

The second part of the chapter opens with Annie's preparations for departure. Annie puts on clothes and jewelry an obeah woman has done "whatever she has done" to them to protect her from "evil spirits and every kind of misfortune" (Kincaid 134), has her hair pressed, has breakfast with her parents, and receives the many friends of her mother who came to say their farewells. Throughout these farewells, Annie keeps what she feels inside: she looks at her parents at breakfast "with a smile on (her) face and disgust in (her) heart"; she says goodbye to Gwen affectionately while wondering why she continues to behave like a monkey. Annie feels that her parents are relived because she is leaving as they tell her that in due time she will write to announce that she is getting married but Annie rejects the notion of marriage and replies: "How absurd!" She also manages to hide her disdain for the way in which Gwen had degenerated into "complete silliness" (Kincaid 137).

room again. Her room, where everything, furniture and clothing, was made by her mother or father, leaves no space for her to express her own individuality. Annie's wish to leave this space forever reflects her desire to create a space for herself where she can no longer feel that "the two of them made me with their own hands" (Kincaid 133). In her search for a new identity, Annie attempts to reject her former self and life:

> I was feeling how much I never wanted to see a boy climb a coconut tree again, how much I never wanted to see the sun shine day in, day out again, how much I never wanted to see my mother bent over a pot cooking me something that she felt would do me good when I ate it, how much I never wanted to feel her long, bony fingers against my cheek again, how much I never wanted to hear her voice in my ear again, how much I longed to be in a place where nobody knew a thing about me and liked me for just that reason, how much the whole world into which I was born had become an unbearable burden and I wished I could reduce it to some small thing that I

make peace with herself and her mother. Annie's is going on a journey similar to the one her mother enacted years ago when she left her mother for Antigua what differs though is that Annie's journey is to England. She is leaving not because she wants to go to England or to study to be a nurse but because departure is the only way to achieve her identity. By travelling to England Annie tries to negotiate her identity and create distance among herself, her mother, and her mother's land to carve her identity. The last chapter follows the progression of Annie's last day at home as she prepares to leave for England to train as a nurse. The chapter manifests Annie's dual position: at seventeen she is still in her old world while trying to distance herself from her past, looking into a future she plans to construct different from what her mother planned for her.

The last chapter is divided into five parts. The first part opens with Annie still in bed looking carefully at her room disconnecting herself from everything around her. She sums up her life saying: "Now they are together and here I am apart," Annie's words highlight the emotional distance between her and her parents. Lying in her bed she enjoys the thought that she will never see the things around her and her

reinvent herself through her eccentric clothes, her new and strange accent, and her newfound power. She tries to differentiate herself from her surroundings and to present herself outwardly as different from anybody her fellow students have ever met. She understands that she needs this new persona when she leaves everything behind and goes to the new dreamed-of space for which she longs.

Annie's illness has given birth to a freer and more independent self and enables Annie to completely affirm her identity. The final chapter of the novel asserts Annie's identity as it begins with; "My name is Annie John" (Kincaid 130). Annie's name, painted in large letters on her new trunk that she asked her father to make for her instead of her mother's trunk that had her stuff inside, is the last thing she sees before falling asleep and the first thing she thinks of when she wakes up on the morning of her departure from Antigua. Annie asserts her name "Annie John" for the first time before leaving her mother's land, Antigua, for the mother country, England. It is worth mentioning that shortly after enunciating her name, she adds, "My mother's name is Annie also" (Kincaid 132). By enunciating her name, Annie affirms her self and attempts to

Chess, Annie seems to be taken back into the womb, as she lies beside her grandmother, "curled up like a little comma, and Ma Chess would lie next to me, curled up like a bigger comma, into which I fit" (Kincaid 126). Ma Chess's success in healing Annie affirms Annie's need to connect to a past different from the one her colonial education has tried to impose on her and of the validity of native cultural traditions in healing Annie.

Nurtured by her grandmother back into health, Annie starts the slow process of recovering her strength. The rain ends, Annie's illness subsides and Ma Chess departs. Some things were washed away in the long rain such as Annie's attachment to her mother and her home. Annie finally decides to carve a persona and a future separate from her mother. Her post-illness resolve is to never see any of the things familiar to her ever again- not to see the sun shine day in and day out, not to see her mother bending over the cooking pot, never to hear her voice again. She longs "to be in a place where nobody knew a thing about (her)" (Kincaid 128). Her home island having become "an unbearable burden," she wishes she could hold it under water until it died. Her return to school is punctuated by her efforts to

> fresh and new-including herself, for she has grown, physically as well as psychologically. She now has succeeded in repudiating every aspect of her former life; both Antigua, the locus of repression, and her mother, the cause of it, must be rejected in order that this newly-created self might flourish in fresh surroundings (338).

Annie's maternal grandmother, Ma Chess, is the one who helps Annie to get well and prepares her for her rebirth. Ma Chess, Annie's Carib grandmother and a powerful Obeah woman, is Annie's link to both the pre-Columbian ancestry that lies at the foundation of Caribbean identity and to the West Indian culture. Ma Chess links Annie to the island's pre-Columbian past and to African cultural practices that the father negates and the mother can only practice secondhand. Ma Chess is a primordial mother who understands the cause of Annie's illness and that Annie needs a mother by her side until she finds a sense of self again: "Sometimes at night, when I would feel that I was all locked up in the warm falling soot and could not find my way out, Ma Chess would come into my bed with me and stay until I was myself" (Kincaid 125). Indeed, with Ma

she had told her mother she wished her dead, remain as an affirmation of her right to her own sexual identity.

It is clear that Annie attempts to obliterate all images of British rule and has a severe anxiety about sexuality and her impending role as a woman in patriarchal culture. H. Adlai Murdoch asserts in his essay "Severing the (M)Other Connection: The Representation of Cultural Identity in Jamaica Kincaid's Annie John" that:

> Annie proceeds to separate herself from long-familiar people, places, and objects. The new state of the wedding picture, where "none of the people ... except for me, had any face left," signifies Annie's final separation from all her relatives, the severing of familiar and familial ties to ensure the survival of her new identity and independence. Finally, the erasure of herself in the confirmation picture "except for the shoes" (Kincaid 120) signifies her renouncing of her old existence and her adoption of the new, the survival of her shoes prefiguring her imminent departure. The process of rebirth reaches its conclusion at the rain's end, where all is regenerated,

completely dependent on her parents and could count on their unqualified love and support. Paravisini-Gebert explains that Annie's illness is "as if, having felt deprived of maternal care, she wills herself into a state of infantilism where she must be coaxed into eating and, like a baby, wets her bed" (101). She imagines that the photographs that sit on her bedside table "began to blow themselves up until they touched the ceiling and then shrink back down, but to a size that I could not easily see" (Kincaid 119). Annie imagines them doing this until they were so limp with exhaustion and reeking with perspiration that Annie decides they need washing. She washes the photos thoroughly trying to straighten creases and removing dirt from her father's trousers. She removes the faces from all the people in the wedding picture, except for herself, in a gesture of self-affirmation and alienation. In a photo of her mother and father, she erases them from the waist down, removing any signs of sexuality that Annie found so problematic; in a picture of herself in her Confirmation dress she erases everything except for a pair of shoes with decorative cutouts on the sides that her mother had found unsuitable and over which they quarreled. The shoes, a reminder of a time when

The horror of the change that has come over the world contributes to Annie's changing image of herself. The world seems to reflect back to her only the image of her own oddness and alienation from her mother and friends. Thus, when she sees her reflection in a store window, she can not recognize herself; what she sees reminds her of a painting she had seen recently of *The Young Lucifer* wearing the kind of smile that tells everyone that this person "is just putting up a good front" (Kincaid 95) and pretending bravado but really "lonely and miserable at the way things had turned out" (Kincaid 95).

Annie's feelings of grief of being cast out by her friends and family and losing her mother at the moment of puberty leads to her breakdown. Annie suffers a mental and physical collapse in which she feels blotted out by blackness. A "black thing" is inside her head, shutting out her "memory of the things that happened" (Kincaid 112). Annie's collapse is accompanied by a three-month rain during which the land is covered with water.

During Annie's illness, Annie retreats into a semblance of her childhood, a time during which she was

Columbus, crowned discoverer of the New World, with words and language.

As a result, Annie is sent to the headmistress and is removed from her position as perfect and punished for defaming one of the empire's great men and is ordered to copy John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. This punishment represents a warning of what will happen to Annie if she does not continue to pay homage to the British dominance and teachings.

This incident and Annie's relationship with her mother make Annie see the world around her grow murderous, intent on killing all that is authentic within her. Annie and her mother also continue to play their established roles of doting mother and adoring daughter to the world while engaging privately in a fierce battle fueled by that "something I could not name" (Kincaid 88) that was akin to hatred and that Annie projects into a dream in which she hears herself chanting the words: "My mother would kill me if she got the chance. I would kill my mother if I had the courage" (Kincaid 89).

truly superhuman, but because they want one's unquestioning support of their often questionable actions. Thus, Annie is able to see through the admiration the children are taught to feel for Columbus whom is portrayed in her history books as a sort of god who created the West Indies with his discovery. Her new insight into the workings of manipulative power allows Annie to see Columbus quite differently- as a grandiose tyrant. Annie takes pleasure in seeing an illustration of Christopher Columbus, being sent to Spain fettered in chains attached to the bottom of a ship, in her West Indian history text. The sight of the great man being brought so low affords Annie a somewhat perverse pleasure; she enjoys seeing the man credited with having brought enslavement to her people and colonial control to her island humiliated. "Just deserts," she calls it and further links the illustration to an episode in her own family history: her tyrannical mother. She writes under the picture of Columbus words she has recently heard her mother use about her own overbearing but now incapacitated father: "The Great Man can No Longer Just Get Up and Go" (Kincaid 78). Annie enjoys humiliating the enslaved

Annie starts focusing on her studies, particularly the study of history, so that she can win the battle between her and her mother, who is now her enemy, over her future. Diane Simmons explains in her book *Jamaica Kincaid* that the reason Kincaid makes Annie focus on the study of history in particular is to suggest "the connection between European dominance and mother-daughter disharmony, for Annie's relationship with her mother mirrors the relationship between colonized and colonizer" (112).

Annie realizes, though, that both powers, maternal and imperial, demand childlike devotion and unquestioning trust. Annie understands that to be acknowledged, loved, and rewarded she must betray her own maturing self and empathize with a power that is determined to quash her individuality and make her into a flattering mirror of itself. Annie as a result is confused about where she really lies "Sometimes, what with our teachers and our books, it was hard for us to tell on which side we really now belonged- with the master or with the slaves" (Kincaid 26).

Moreover, Annie realizes that one may be called upon to revere certain figures not because they deserve it or are

accept. Annie understands that in order to grow into her own individuality, she must outgrow Gwen and everything she represents. The deterioration of Annie's relationship with Gwen is the result of Annie's movement away from the gender limits of her home society into a world of chances.

On the other hand, Annie's friend the Red Girl introduces Annie to the notion of transgression, and offers an example in flaunting the conventions that Gwen exemplifies. Unwashed, accustomed to playing marbles with boys, and nameless except for her descriptive nickname; the Red Girl, she stands against every constraint Annie finds stifling in life. She teaches Annie how to betray her mother and Gwen by offering tempting opportunities for breaking the rules of respectability that are so intricately bound in Annie's mind with her mother's acceptance of colonial mores. Annie's life begins to revolve around her triumphs over her mother's supervision, learning lying and deceit to fight against her mother. Ultimately, however, the Red Girl's style of freedom is too random to provide an ideal model for Annie's more ambitious and goal-oriented personality and she must leave the text so that Annie can transgress her and start carving her identity.

carve out a direction for her future. In her book *Jamaica Kincaid: A Critical Companion*, Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert asserts:

> Gwen and the Red Girl can be seen as the two sides of Annie's duality, the two poles between which she must define herself. The fine line Annie must establish between these two alternatives still remains to be drawn at the novel's end, but the characterization of the two friends help to flesh-out Annie's dilemma, bringing it to dramatic light. (112)

On the one hand, Annie's friend Gwen is the idealized object that seems to fulfill every image of goodness and neatness Annie has been taught by her mother to aspire to. The pleats of her tunic are always in place, her cotton socks fit neatly around her ankles, and her ash-colored knees look as if she had just finished saying her prayers. She represents the future that Annie must learn to stay away from; leaving school early, taking great delight in gossiping, marrying someone she has known all her life. Gwen's development as a character maintains her within the scope of conventionality that Annie fears her mother wants her to

own childhood, about a trip down a mountain with a basket of figs on her head. By the time she reached the bottom, the load, which had grown heavier and heavier, was revealed to contain a very long black snake, and she collapsed in horror. As the mother hopes, Annie is very much moved by this story, feeling as though her "heart would break" (Kincaid 69). Annie's mother knows that these stories could cast a spell on Annie and make her sympathize with her and confess the location of her hiding place to her. Annie is about to give in when she awakens from her daydream to hear her mother's voice, "warm and sot and treacherous," asking where the marbles are. Annie responds with her own warm, soft, "and newly acquired treacherous voice" that she does not have any marbles and has never played with any.

Now, the Red Girl, having served her purpose of helping to push Annie's relationship with her mother to its inevitable breaking point, disappears from Annie's world just like Gwen. Annie discovers that childish rebellion is not the answer; it is only a step along the way to finding a new world. Annie's friends Gwen and the Red Girl (to each of whom a chapter is dedicated) also represent two alternatives open to Annie as she seeks to define her personality and

herself that has not been fostered by, and is not sanctioned by, her mother.

Annie moves from deceit to theft in order to buy small trinkets to offer as presents to the Red Girl. She steals from her parents, rejoicing in betraying their trust. Annie is discovered by her mother as she emerges from the special place under the house where she hides her marbles. Discovering in her hand an unusually beautiful marble she had won after a great effort and which she intended to offer to the Red Girl, the mother becomes obsessed with discovering Annie's hiding place. Her failure to do so only contributes to Annie's growing contempt for her; she delights in her description of how her mother feels frustrated of not knowing where the marbles were while her foot is touching the very place where the marbles are hidden. She is afraid that her mother's vigilance will make her abandon her secret life with the Red Girl and playing marbles with companions her mother would find unsuitable.

Annie's mother becomes obsessed with finding the marbles and uses the narrative of her past to persuade Annie into revealing their hiding place. She weaves tales of her

Annie's mother disapproves of and who represents the antithesis of what her mother considered proper behavior of a young girl. The Red Girl climbs trees, plays marbles with boys, bathes and changes her clothes only once a week, keeps her hair dirty and matted, and her fingernails filled with dirt. Annie's secret friendship with the Red Girl posed a direct challenge to Annie's mother, and Annie therefore "worshipped the ground her unwashed feet walked on" (Kincaid 59). They would escape together to the lighthouse, from whose balcony they had a vantage point on both land and sea, as if to show that their friendship shed a clearer light on those aspects of life that Annie's mother had tried to keep her sheltered from.

The Red Girl represents the possibility of courage and vision, qualities missing from the increasingly controlled sphere of Annie and her mother. The Red Girl further helps to broaden Annie's horizons by introducing the unladylike and forbidden game of marbles. Since her mother disapproves of marbles, Annie plays secretly devoting all her free time to the game, playing in a way "that I had never done anything" (Kincaid 61). Through the Red Girl's agency, Annie, for the first time, discovers something in

With the help of the essay, Gwen falls in love with Annie and Annie tries to replace her mother's lost world and affection with that of Gwen. Annie's relationship with Gwen does not last long though and deteriorates. Having demonstrated extraordinary intellectual ability, Annie moves to a higher grade with girls older than herself from who she feels alienated. Annie tries to maintain her connection with Gwen but their paths were quickly diverging. While Annie seemed increasingly concerned with books and dreams of escape, Gwen appeared preoccupied with conventional things. Gwen's concern with gossip and matters of love and matrimony, leads Annie to conclude that "something terrible had happened, and I couldn't tell what it was" (Kincaid 93). Her suggestion that Annie marry her brother Rowan, a suggestion completely different from Annie's different hopes and aspirations, shows the extent of the gap that has opened between them, and Annie begins to avoid Gwen with pretexts of academic work and other obligations.

Annie fails to replicate the universe of maternal love with Gwen and Annie grows more rebellious and befriends the unwashed, unfettered Red Girl, who is everything

the sea, swimming naked like two "sea mammals" (42). When the mother returns, she comforts Annie and tells her she will never leave her.

The episode, as described by Annie in her essay, leads to a recurring dream in which her mother swims away and sits remote and unapproachable on a rock, sometimes by herself, sometimes joined by her father. Annie invents a fictional ending though in which her mother, deeply worried at being told of the recurring dream, cries and holds Annie in her arms, erasing the nightmare. Her mother's actual reaction when told of the dream, however, had been quiet different: she had turned her back on Annie indifferently and warned her not to eat certain kinds of unripe fruit before going to bed.

Annie's essay is adored by her classmates and makes her the adored center of the school world as she has been the adored center of her mother's world. The reason the essay so moves the girls is because Annie's essay discusses the future all the girls seem to dread. Though Annie's story ends with a lie, it speaks comfortingly to the girls' own fears, and as a result the story's author is an instant heroine.

liberated voice" (9). Talking back does not fully liberate Annie from the powerful grasp of her mother but increases the alienation and disaffection between Annie and her mother. Annie says:

> When I looked down it was as if the ground had opened up between us, making a deep wide split. On one side of this split stood my mother, bent over my dinner cooking in a pot; and on the other side stood I, in my arms carrying my schoolbooks and inside carrying the thimble that weighed worlds. (Kincaid 103)

Annie seeks to establish her identity outside her mother's circle of power and tries to replace her mother's love by excelling at school and by writing an essay which differs from other essays of her classmates. In contrast with the work of her classmates, which seems very concerned with relatives living abroad and hopes of emigration, Annie produces a moving exploration of the growing gap between her and her mother, illustrated through a correspondence between water and the loss of the mother. The essay describes Annie and her mother taking a medicinal bath in

ultimate reason for the mother-daughter estrangement. Upon entering the realm of womanhood, the "imperfect" space of becoming a woman, Annie is sent off to learn perfection and how to become a "perfect" lady. Despite being in harmony and being close to the biological mother, Annie is sent to learn colonial habits, which represents a subtle worshiping of the colonial mother.

For Annie, being a "perfect" lady signals self-effacement, for it mirrors colonial habits and ways. Whereupon, in her young eyes, her mother is transformed into the enemy as she is a perpetrator of colonial habits, first, for denouncing female sexuality and renouncing her own femaleness and, second for adopting and thereafter attempting to indoctrinate her daughter into colonialist values and teachings. As a way to protect herself, Annie starts to talk back to her mother after being silent for a period of time. Talking back creates a larger distance between Annie and her mother. Bell Hooks discusses the act of talking back in an entire book entitled *Talking Back.* In her words, talking back is a "rite of initiation. It is that act of speech, that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject- the

to learn one thing and another. I was sent to someone who knew all about manners. (Kincaid 26-27)

This separation from her mother has a very bad effect on Annie and her relationship with her mother becomes tense. This rejection from Annie's mother makes Annie view adolescence and sexuality her worst enemy. Unlike childhood, a period of innocence, in which Annie was valued and felt close to her mother. Annie's adolescence is regarded as a curse and Annie is treated exactly like one by her mother, who unjustly punishes her by alienating her from her world. The friendship and love that Annie and her mother once shared is nowhere to be found and their relationship changed to distrust and hatred. This is because of Annie's entrance into the realm of womanhood. A woman now, Annie is expelled from her mother's Eden.

Because female sexuality is deemed taboo, Annie is denied proper initiation into womanhood. Annie is left on her own to decipher what it means to grow into a young woman. From her mother's unexpected reaction, she understood that this "young lady business" was something offensive, something that causes hurt and pain, and the

stands out against her mother's efforts to recreate herself in her daughter and against her mother's colonial notions of what both she and her daughter should be.

Annie experiences separation from her own mother who withdraws from her, for no apparent reason, upon her entrance into womanhood. Annie views her mother's separation from her as a loveless act, a mother's betrayal of her own child. Accustomed to being close to her mother in her earlier years, Annie suffers a wrenching separation from her mother in her pubescent years, a very difficult period in a young girl's life that needs extra care and closeness from the mother but her mother suddenly distances her and abruptly terminates the ritual of dressing alike:

> You are getting too old for that (dressing alike). It's time you had your own clothes. You just cannot go around the rest of your life looking like a little me.... Because of this young lady business, instead of days spent with perfect harmony with my mother, I trailing in her footsteps, she showering down on me her kisses and affection and attention, I was now sent off

allows for possibilities of personal and intellectual growth that shapes the character and tests the mettle" (20). Hall also explains that identities are always relational and incomplete, in process. As Stuart Hall puts it:

> Instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. (Hall "Cultural" 222)

In Jamaica Kincaid's novel *Annie John*, Annie undergoes a process of growth, of discovery of self and coming to terms with the world. She realizes that physical distance is the only way to truly construct her identity. Annie decides to leave her family, especially her mother, and to go to England to discover herself and find her own place in the world.

Annie dominates the text of *Annie John* as she is the narrator and central character of the novel. Through her, we are able to so the other characters in the novel. She is a complex figure. As she moves through her adolescence, she

past; but cautions that old identities should not be taken literally:

> Though they seem to invoke an origin in a historical past with which they continue to correspond, actually identities are about using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. Identities (...) relate to the invention of tradition as much as to tradition itself: not the so-called return to roots but a coming-to-terms with our 'routes'. (Hall "Introduction" 4)

Hall also explains that: "Identity is a structured representation which only achieves its positive through the narrow eye of the negative. It has to go through the eye of the needle of the other before it can construct itself" (Hall "Local" 21). Vijay Agnew discusses in her book: *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity: A Search for Home* that "immigrating to a new country and a different culture means crossing frontiers and borders that can intimidate, but (...) also

her mother and the society who try to erase her identity and attempt to indoctrinate her into colonialist values and teachings. Annie recognizes that in order to achieve her identity she has to separate her self from her mother and everything holding her back from achieving her identity and expressing her own individuality the way she desires so she decides to leave the society in which she lives, rejecting her former self and life, in order to achieve her identity. She understands that she will have to negotiate between her past, present, and future to create her identity and decides to leave her Old world and to travel to the New World in order to create a new identity made from old cloth.

Identity has received a great deal of scholarly interest in the last few years. A good reason for this newly acquired attention is because identity is a necessary feature of post-modernism. Identity is not something that was created and afterwards became fixed, but something that is always changing and shifting. Stuart Hall has written recently in his essay "Negotiating Caribbean Identities" that "identity is not in the past to be found, but in the future to be constructed" (3). He also does not believe that the people of the Caribbean should abandon their project of recovering the

Making New Identities from Old Cloth in Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John*

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the quest for identity in Jamaica Kincaid's novel *Annie John*. The reason for choosing this novel in particular is because little crucial attention has been given to Caribbean women writers and their writings and because of the importance of the theme of identity. This study seeks to investigate the processes of negotiating identity in order to discover one self and come to terms with the world. In this novel, the characters struggle between the two worlds, the Old World, namely the Caribbean and the New World, namely England to carve their identities. The protagonist of the novel, Annie, decides to travel to the New World and leave the Old world in which she lives to escape

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